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NOAA releases plan for managing and protecting Monitor National Marine Sanctuary

Based on several years of scientific assessment and public involvement, today NOAA released the final management plan and environmental assessment for Monitor National Marine Sanctuary. The plan outlines how the sanctuary will operate over the next five to 10 years.

Specifically, it provides a framework for the sanctuary to refine its education and outreach programs; continue restoration and conservation of USS *Monitor* artifacts; consider possible expansion of the sanctuary's boundaries; and work with the state of North Carolina to strengthen local economies in coastal communities through maritime heritage tourism. These specific priorities were identified during the review period that began in 2008.

Monitor National Marine Sanctuary protects the wreck of the famed Civil War ironclad USS *Monitor*, best known for its battle with the Confederate ironclad *Virginia* in Hampton Roads, Va., on March 9, 1862.

"The sanctuary protects an important part of our country's history," said David Alberg, sanctuary superintendent. "The final management plan is the result of a collaborative effort and the hard work of sanctuary staff and the sanctuary's advisory council. It reflects public input and offers detailed guidance that will be used to manage the USS *Monitor* and the sanctuary environment into the future."

Beginning in 2008, the sanctuary's management plan was reviewed through an extensive public process that included input from stakeholders and the sanctuary's advisory council through workshops, public hearings and submission of comments.

Periodic management plan review is required by Congress for each of the 13 national marine sanctuaries administered by NOAA to ensure that they continue to conserve, protect and enhance their nationally significant living and cultural resources while allowing compatible commercial and recreational activities.

The site of the USS *Monitor* shipwreck, Monitor National Marine Sanctuary was designated as the nation's first marine sanctuary on Jan. 30, 1975. Creation of the sanctuary, located 16 miles southeast of Cape Hatteras, N.C., has helped ensure the long-term protection of the wreck site of the famed Civil War ironclad for all generations.

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On the Web:

Monitor National Marine Sanctuary: <http://monitor.noaa.gov>

NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>